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THE SALVADOR STRATEGY

OUT IN Langley, Virginia, analysts for the Central Intelligence Agency now hold a weekly meeting devoted solely to the Philippines. Over at the Pentagon, the Defense Intelligence Agency is putting together a special task force to monitor events there. At the State Department, George Shultz's briefing materials contain twice as much about the Philippines as they did six months ago. The intelligence officials and policymakers are discussing ways to influence the next elections, and some even advocate getting rid of President Ferdinand Marcos.

The situation is serious enough that approximately 50 employees of the CIA, DIA, and State Department—as well as a few academics and an international banker—met for two days in early August at the National War College in Washington to discuss what the U.S. should do next. A theme of the conference was how to convince Marcos and his powerful and ambitious wife, Imelda, that Washington is serious about democratic reform. One frequently discussed strategy would be to leak to the press "confidential" documents expressing the administration's dissatisfaction with the Marcoses.

Even the legendary Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale was brought out of retirement to address the gathering. Lansdale, still sprightly at 77, played a colorful role working for the CIA and helping the Philippine government defeat an ethnic/guerrilla uprising in the early 1950s. As part of his activities, Lansdale covertly supported the election of an honest and reformist president in 1953. He then moved over to Vietnam, where he enjoyed less success and where his exploits were acidly memorialized by Graham Greene in *The Quiet American*.

What today's Ed Lansdales are struggling to prevent in the Philippines is the victory of the communist New People's Army. The NPA's growth has directly paralleled Marcos's authoritarian rule. In 1972, when Marcos declared martial law, the NPA did not have enough men under arms to control even the smallest and most remote rural village. Today the NPA has an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 well-armed guerrillas and perhaps as many as one million supporters. The NPA's rallying cry is the "U.S.-Marcos dictatorship," and it is gaining new recruits at the rate of about 20 percent a year, according to the Pentagon.

Some policymakers are urging that Washington withdraw its support from Marcos as a way of undercutting the NPA. A few even advocate that the U.S. work for his ouster. The possibility of a U.S.-backed coup against Marcos has been discussed in general terms within the administration. However, the idea has been rejected, at least for now. In large part this stems from the attitude among some key officials that however corrupt Marcos is, he is pro-U.S., anticommunist, and supports the continued presence of the U.S. bases in the Philippines.

For now, U.S. policymakers are hoping to achieve their objectives by pushing reforms—"building democratic institutions," as several officials phrased it. The goal is to guarantee that the next presidential election, scheduled for 1987, is relatively fair and democratic. This approach is consciously modeled on the administration's policy in El Salvador.

The administration has quietly funneled three million dollars into the Philippines, according to *The San Francisco Examiner*. The money, the *Examiner* reported, has been channeled from the National Endowment for Democracy through the Asian American Free Labor Institute. Though ostensibly an arm of the AFL-CIO, the institute receives the bulk of its funding from the U.S. government and has historic links to the CIA. AFLI's brother organization, the American Institute for Free Labor Development, was a conduit for U.S. funds to the Salvadoran elections.

But there are serious obstacles to the Salvadoran approach in the Philippines. As one person told the War College gathering, "There can be no reform with Marcos." Marcos has, for example, appointed three loyalists to the Government Commission on Elections while revoking the accreditation of the independent National Citizens Committee for Free Elections, which was founded by Lansdale and was widely praised for its monitoring role in the 1984 parliamentary elections.

What really angered the U.S. policymakers hoping for meaningful reforms was Marcos's decision to bring the country's local police forces, the Integrated National Police, under the control of Malacannang Palace, the Philippine White House. Marcos's move will give him even greater control over voters on the next election day.

With Marcos increasingly resistant to reform, U.S. policymakers are searching for a candidate to back against him. Ideal would be another José Napoleón Duarte, who has served the administration well in El Salvador. But most of the Philippine opposition leaders are decisively more liberal than the Reagan administration. For example, a "Declaration of Unity" signed by 14 major noncommunist leaders last December demanded that "ownership of the principal means of production must be diffused and income equitably distributed to promote development, combat poverty, and ensure the rational utilization of resources."

Moreover, many of these opposition leaders say that if they take office they will make some sort of a deal with the NPA, including bringing some of the Marxists into the government. The Reagan administration is obviously opposed to negotiations with Marxists.

As Washington scrambles for a solution, only two things seem clear. One is that there is no consensus on exactly what the United States should or can do. The second is that the situation is rapidly deteriorating (that was one of the few areas of agreement at the War College conference). One intelligence source, who has been monitoring the intelligence reports from the Philippines and who consulted with U.S. officials, said, "I have never heard such pessimism about any situation in all the years I've been in Washington."

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